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THE

CHURCH OF THE SPIRIT.

BY

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Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE CHURCH OF THE SPIRIT.

When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth. — John xvi. 13.

One of the most striking characteristics of Christian theology is the subordinate place which has been, as a rule, assigned to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian formula, which has for many centuries represented the faith of the vast majority of the Christian Church, announces the relationship of three equal and separate manifestations of the Godhead, to each of which the devotion of Christians may with equal fitness turn. In the practical piety, however, of great numbers of believers the thought of the divine Fatherhood and the recognition of the work of the Spirit have been in large degree dominated by the peculiar power and persuasiveness of the doctrine of the Son. It is not surprising that the person of Jesus should have had this peculiar homage. Out of the vastness of the methods of the Father, out of the vagueness of the work of the Spirit, stands this human figure, with the affections, friendships, trials, and tears of human life, tempted as we are, yet without sin; and many a life which has seemed to itself a stranger among the great designs of the Providence of God or the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit has felt itself at home in the companionship of the self-sacrificing and suffering Jesus. On this natural desire of the human heart for the sympathy of God many theologians have seized, and have taught a Christo-

centric faith, in which the search for God shall be satisfied in the person of Christ. Without entering into any discussion of the validity of the Trinitarian formula, it is obvious that this exclusive emphasis upon one of its factors is but a partial utilization of its scope and significance. It is, in fact, a kind of Christological Unitarianism. The features of the Father are hidden behind the mighty processes of creation and evolution; the witness of the Spirit remains undetached as a distinct personality from the influence of the Father and of the Son; and there is left amid the shifting complexity of theological conceptions the single convincing revelation of the word made flesh, full of its unmistakable grace and truth. Back, then, to Jesus the heart of simple piety turns; and the theologian meets this Christo-centric emotion with his doctrine of an immanent, eternal, present Christ. "My faith in God," said such a man, "and even my faith in the goodness of the world, are the product of my loyalty to Jesus Christ." And the same note of spiritual stability is struck by the great poet of Christian theology:—

> "The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the all-great were the all-loving, too,—
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
> Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!"

Yet in the teaching of Jesus himself nothing is more conspicuous than his emphasis on the mission of the Holy Spirit. Standing at the end of his own ministry, Jesus distinctly announces that his work is partial and preparatory, and that the truth to which he testifies is to be a progressive revelation. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now." "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." To his followers this thought of a progressive revelation seemed simply paralyzing. They had believed that he would himself guide them into all truth, and they were bewildered

at his declaration that there were many things necessarily undisclosed by him. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest," says Thomas; "Whither goest thou?" asks Peter; "Show us the Father," is the still more elementary demand of Philip; until at last the thought of the unfinished revelation sweeps over them with such a wave of discouragement that they do not even ask, "Whither goest thou?" because "sorrow has filled their hearts." In Jesus, on the other hand, there appears no such sense of prematureness in departure or incompleteness in work. The end of his ministry has come just where it should. "It is expedient for you," he says, "that I go away." He finds tranquillity and strength in the assurance that his own work is to be taken up into the greater unity of the purposes of God, and to receive its interpretation, not alone through that which it has given, but through that for which it has prepared the way. "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father." "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me." Beyond his own teaching, beyond his own life, Jesus discerns the movement of history guided by the Spirit of the truth; and, having touched his friends with a susceptibility to that Spirit of truth, he trusts them with the most splendid confidence to the progressive revelation. How majestic in its self-effacement is his thought of the world! Onward and ever onward is to move the life of man, into disclosures of the life of God which even Jesus himself was not permitted to unfold. From the Father and the Son, as the creeds with profound truthfulness repeat, is to proceed the Spirit of the truth; and through that procession of the Holy Ghost the life of God is to reveal itself from age to age.

> "Nor bounds, nor clime, nor creed thou know'st;
> Wide as our needs, thy favors fall.
> The white wings of the Holy Ghost
> Stoop, seen or unseen, o'er the heads of all."

How meagre and arid would seem to Jesus a scholastic discussion concerning the personality of the Holy Spirit, when he was praying that the personality of his friends might be made holy by that Spirit! It is the witness of the life of God in the soul of man. It is the immanent Deity, the progressive revelation, the undeparting and undiminished inspiration. With a sublime and tranquil faith Jesus delivers his friends to the guidance of this Spirit, and departs from them with the sense that his mission is complete when he has committed them to the direction of the Spirit of the truth.

Such is the teaching of Jesus; and through the whole course of Christian history, while many souls have found their sufficient satisfaction in the doctrine of the Son, there have been many natures in all communions which have received with peculiar reverence this witness of the mission of the Spirit. Such souls create an apostolic succession of the Holy Ghost. They have felt the touch of God upon his world and upon themselves. They have rested in the strength of the Everlasting Arms. They have listened to the harmonies and pathos of human experience. They have committed themselves to the Spirit of the truth, and have been led by it wherever it will; and then, as they turn back to Jesus, they have seen that in this attitude of spiritual alertness and responsiveness his life also was sustained, and that the Spirit of the truth proceeds not from the Father only, but from the influence and teaching of the Son.

Who are these interpreters of the mission of the Spirit? They are the devout souls in every age who have found God and rested in him — the idealists with their philosophy, the transcendentalists with their vision, the poets, the seers, the mystics of the Universal Church. A strange and varied fellowship they make, of many races, traditions, and creeds, held in the unity of the Spirit of the truth,

witnesses of the life of God in the souls of men. They utter themselves in a unison of language which is neither ancient nor modern, but timeless, universal, one. Across the centuries speaks the Jew Philo: "God has breathed into man from heaven a portion of his own divinity." "The soul of man is an indivisible portion of that divine and blessed Spirit"; and with this word of Hebrew wisdom is heard the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, "The life was the light of men." A century passes, and Plotinus bears witness, "The wise man recognizes the idea of the good within him; this he develops by the withdrawal into the holy place of his own soul." Other centuries pass, and Bernard of Clairvaux, preacher, administrator, saint, gives testimony: "It is in the Spirit of sound, but of penetration; not talkative, but effective; that union with God occurs." "The word is not one not dinning the ears, but persuading the affections." Still other centuries pass, and the Dominican Tauler preaches: "When the mind is rightly directed, it tendeth toward this ground whose image is far beyond its power." "This revelation must take place in the Spirit; for God is a Spirit, and our created spirits must be united to and lost in the Uncreated." So through the ages is renewed this serene message. "Madam," says the holy Franciscan to Madam Guyon, "you are disappointed and perplexed because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and you will find him"; and the pupil soon testifies, "The soul passing out of itself, by dying to itself, necessarily passes into its divine object." "My own experience seemed to me a verification of this." German theology begins its modern period with the declaration of Schleiermacher, that the Christian consciousness is the test of Christian truth, and that the sense of dependence upon God supplants all need of proof of the being of God; and German criticism re-

calls the saying of Richard Rothe, that "next to the Bible as a help to the religious life, stand the writings of the mystics." Even across the broad and shadowless region of English thought, with its philosophy of utility and its theology of an Establishment, there strike at times these softer shadows of the witness of the Spirit, like soft clouds that fleck a treeless field. "Great things," writes George Fox, "did the Lord lead me into, and wonderful paths were opened unto me." "As people come into subjection to the Spirit of God, they receive the word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being." Finally, the same strain of this tranquil music of the soul is heard amid the noise of commercialism in the New World, and is greeted with a peculiar responsiveness. How many souls in how many religious communions have been supported by Emerson's confident words: "Within man is the soul of the holy, the wise silence, the universal beauty, the eternal one." How many have sung to themselves the confessions of Jones Very:

> "In finding thee are all things round us found,
> In losing thee are all things lost beside."

How many have greeted with gratitude the words of Phillips Brooks: "It is a blessed thing that in all times there have always been men to whom religion has not presented itself as a system of doctrine, but as an elemental life in which the soul of man came into very direct and close communion with the soul of God." "It is the mystics of every age who have done most to blend the love of truth and the love of man within the love of God, and so to keep alive or restore a healthy tolerance."

Thus, if we may give to the theological phrase a new significance, we may trace the long procession of the Holy Ghost, winding through the paths of Christian history, separated a little from the main body of believers, distrusted often for indifference to theological or ecclesiastical details, yet transmitting through the ages the apostolic succession of the spiritual life, testifying to the inner light which is the life of God, undisturbed among transitions of theology or conflicts of sects, confident and forward-looking among the mysteries of life, because recalling the Master's promise that the Spirit of the truth will lead them into all truth. And never was this witness of the Spirit so broadly manifested as to-day. In all branches of the Christian Church a new confidence appears in the living God, the immanent Christ, the Christian consciousness, the significance of the soul. As long ago as the twelfth century an Italian mystic, whom Dante places in his Paradise with Saint Anselm and with Hugo of Saint Victor, conceived that the movement of history was to unfold itself in three great periods — the first revealing the character of the Father, the second teaching the gospel of the Son, the third imparting the mission of the Spirit, and that these periods were to succeed each other as the spring succeeds the winter and the summer succeeds the spring, or as the dawn follows the night and the day follows the dawn. We need not enter into these vast speculations of universal history to find a place for the Spirit of the truth; but this, at least, we may perhaps believe, that, as a new century summons the religious life to a new examination of its creed and conduct, it will be discerned that never before was that creed so simple, so self-evidencing, or so sincere. It may be that the church of the twentieth century is to be the church of the Spirit, and that the text of its preaching is to be the Master's word: "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

And now I go on to ask, as we gather here in loyalty to our special faith, What to us is this lineage of the spiritual life? What have we in common with this fellowship of souls in many ages and churches who have lived in the

Spirit? Many lines of influence and inheritance, no doubt, meet in the Unitarian movement; and many types of preaching and living present themselves among us to-day. From one point of view we may be regarded as sheer dissenters, protestants against the prevailing creed, anti-Trinitarians. It was a work which had to be done, — this defence of simplicity and reasonableness in religion, this attack upon statements of doctrine which degraded the nature of man and insulted the nature of God. Yet it was an incidental rather than, as many imagine, a final task; and it confronts us not only with a duty, but with a peculiar temptation. The creed of negation constantly solicits us to a fellowship of denial and a policy of obstruction. It is a creed easy to preach and still easier to practise. It encourages the poor conceit of conscious superiority and the barren homiletics of superficial controversy. If such a creed, as many of our critics and some of our adherents seem to believe, were the foundation of our faith; if our communion were but a cave of Adullam, where, as the book of Samuel says, "every one that was discontented gathered themselves" — we might have our little day of usefulness, like other forms of negation, and should then be lost in the inevitable reaffirmations of the Church. In comparison with such a communion a house built upon the sand would be a monument of stability and permanence.

From another point of view the Unitarians may appear to be the representatives of the once dreaded movement of English rationalism and German criticism. The English movement in philosophy, beginning with Locke and ending with Mill, the scientific habit of mind in Priestley, and the constant controversy with an established church, all gave to the earlier Unitarianism of Great Britain an apologetics of externalism. "The Scriptures," wrote the sainted Lant Carpenter, "are our only guide." The rationalism of the Unitarians had no other foundation than that which supported the orthodoxy they opposed. It was an issue of interpretation, concerning whose principles both parties were agreed. This English rationalism was soon re-enforced by the more learned criticism of Germany; and the problem of interpretation began to concern not texts of Scripture only, but the very character of the Bible itself. It was a learned, unshrinking, scientific process, in whose flame supernaturalism, in its traditional form, was to be consumed, and theology was to be tried as by fire. To this enterprise of candid inquiry the Unitarians committed themselves. The first literary venture of Theodore Parker was a translation of De Wette's Introduction to the Old Testament. Two generations of our ministers were taught the demonstrations of rational criticism. Mysticism was to their teachers a title of contempt. "Schleiermacher," said Andrews Norton, "well called the veil-maker." It is a strain in our blood of which we may be justly proud. The rationalism of that generation opened the way for the more fruitful methods of the higher criticism which is revolutionizing Biblical criticism to-day, and the spirit of rationalism still gives to those who accept it a sense of composure among the Biblical controversies which threaten to rend the life of many a Christian Church.

Yet how incomplete is the story of the Unitarian spirit, if it were told either in the language of theological dissent or of philosophical rationalism! How far we still stand from the spirit of Channing or of Martineau! How obvious it is that another line of inheritance must be considered in the interpretation of our history! Looking back upon his early training, the leader of our generation makes his confession. "Steeped in empirical and necessarian modes of thought," writes Martineau, "I served out successive terms of willing captivity to Locke and Hartley, to Collins, Edwards, and Priestley, to Bentham and James

Mill"; and he recalls himself as "a logical prig, in whom I am humbled to recognize myself." Was there ever, indeed, a school of philosophy less capable of permanent control over the greatest of modern idealists; and was it not a distinct epoch in modern philosophy when in Germany Martineau received what he calls "the gift of fresh conceptions, the unsealing of hidden openings of self-consciousness, with unmeasured corridors and sacred halls behind"? What have we here come upon but a new line of inheritance, the signs of which are easy to recognize in our ideals and habit of mind to-day? Behind all the differences in definitions of the Godhead, which may set us apart from the main body of the Church, and beneath all principles of Biblical interpretation, lie these fresh conceptions of self-consciousness, this confidence in the unveiling of hidden springs, this sense of the life of God in the soul of man.

Some thirty years ago I was walking as a student with the saintly Professor Tholuck, in the famous garden where he discoursed with two generations of Americans, and he inquired in what communion of Christians I had been reared; and, on my replying that my father was a Unitarian minister, the great man remarked, "Ah! the Unitarians, they are mystics!" It seemed to me then a strange definition; and many a critic of Unitarianism, and some perhaps of its defenders, would think the German scholar ill informed. Yet, in fact, his judgment was profoundly and demonstrably true. The Unitarians are mystics. They have contended for theological simplicity, they have contributed to Biblical interpretation; but the representative expressions of their habit of mind are to be sought, not in these fields of learning, but in their witness of the present life of God in the present life of man. It is a line of descent which has been, for the most part, overlooked, even by eulogists of Unitarianism. It is, indeed, not the

trait of our stock which is most open to observation; and there are many lives among us with hardly a trace of such a pedigree. Yet through the blood of many generations runs this inherited strain of free and rational piety, which it is well for us, as we gather here, to trace. Three great names sufficiently illustrate the Unitarianism of Great Britain and the United States during the seventy-five years which we are met to recall; and, while each of these men had his part in theological and philosophical progress, each of them is primarily and fundamentally a prophet of the spiritual life. In Channing, as was said of him by that kindred spirit, John Hamilton Thom, "the prominent thought, the master light of all his seeing, is the spiritual relation of himself and of every man to God." "It is the mighty monotone of his mind, like the monotone of the ocean, which souls that are not attuned to it may sometimes feel oppressive." This is our inheritance from Channing, a monotone of the spirit, a sense of the divine in man which rises out of the waves of human experience, as great rollers with their steady movement heave up out of a tossing sea. In Parker it must be admitted, this witness of the Spirit is less uniform and continuous. There seemed to reside in him two natures, one aggressive and combative — the nature of the reformer — the other contemplative and poetic — the nature of the mystic. One of his natures was stirred by Garrison and the sense of wrong; the other side was stirred by Schleiermacher and the sense of God. There was the Parker of the platform and the Parker of the prayers; and, while the history of reform may record the activity of the agitator, the history of religion will give a still more permanent place to the spiritual intuitionalist. Finally, in Martineau, the sufficient exponent of our own generation, all the lines of our spiritual inheritance meet. His contributions to theology began sixty years ago in the Liverpool controversy, and

reached their monumental expression in his "Study of Religion." The interpretation of Scripture was his concern in early youth, and the search for "The Seat of Authority" the last inquiry of his extreme old age. Great, however, as were his contributions to theological dissent and Biblical learning, neither of these interests exhausted or even represented the main direction of his mind. Martineau is at heart a mystic. His spirit dwells with the Spirit of the truth, unembarrassed by transitions in theology or exegesis. There is, he says, "a close affinity, perhaps ultimate identity, between religion and poetry." "Preaching is essentially a lyric expression of the soul." He was, as he wrote not long ago in one of his noblest utterances, "not flung into a scene which he has not learned to consecrate." To make "his affirmation of God," he had taken his stand, "not on the shifting alluvial slope of history, but on the rooted rock which belongs to the very structure of the world."

Such is the witness of the great names of our history; and when, in our own time, one would detect among the varied expressions of denominational life the heart of a contemporary religious movement, to what evidence should he turn? He should look, I think, not so much to its machinery of organization or abstract statements of belief, but to the religious sentiment itself, as it expresses itself in lyrics of praise and prayer. Some ways of faith hardly admit of being sung at all, and have made no important contribution to the history of Christian verse. Other forms of faith have borne as their flower a special quality of sacred lyrics, with a fragrance of their own. The heart of Methodism is disclosed in the hymns of the Wesleys; the nature of evangelical piety is laid bare in the hymns of Watts and Doddridge; the inner faith of the Moravians is told in their glowing hymns; and in the hymns of Keble and Newman is the characteristic note of the Anglican

Church. "If a man," said Fletcher of Saltoun, "were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation." With equal justice we might say that if a man were permitted to make the hymns of a church he need not care who should make its theology. Tried, then, by this interior test, what is the spirit of the Unitarian tradition? No one can fail to see that its religious life has uttered itself in a lyric expression of singular freshness and beauty, touching in many moods and keys one dominating note. It is a hymnology of the Spirit, the song of those who rest within the Everlasting Arms. It is not an accident that out of a religious movement which is often held to be sheer rationalism or dissent there has grown the most clearly defined type of religious verse which this country has produced. It is not an accident that the lyrics of Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Bryant, and Emerson proceed from lives bred in the rational piety of the Unitarians, or that Whittier, who must be joined with them in the character of his verse, was joined with them also in the fellowship of the "Inner Light." And, when we pass from the great masters, what does it mean that from a group of minor poets of the same tradition — from Samuel Longfellow and Furness and Hedge and many others among the elders, from Hosmer, Gannett, and Chadwick, and many others of the present generation — there has proceeded a strain of lyric theism whose music penetrates many a church where the doors are closed against the poets? It means that beneath the vigorous rationalism and sincere dissent of the Unitarians there is a deeper movement of religious life, a consciousness of God which none but a poet can utter, a spiritual lineage which unites these modern minds to the great company of witnesses of the real presence — the fellowship of the Church of the Spirit.

It would be contrary to the very thought I have in mind

if this claim to an inheritance of spiritual religion should be interpreted as the arrogant assumption of an exclusive right. The truth which makes men free is always the same truth. The sympathies of the Church of the Spirit are not denominational or provincial or contemporary. The devout Unitarian finds a familiar speech in Thomas à Kempis and in Fénelon. The spirit of Jacob Böhme is no stranger to the spirit of Emerson. The "Discourses concerning Religion" of Schleiermacher, in all probability, suggested the "Discourse concerning Religion" of Theodore Parker. The idealism of Fichte would have been greeted by Channing as the voice of a friend. It is, indeed, not easy to fix the historic place of these witnesses of the Spirit. When one of them sings —

> "Go not, my soul, in search of him,
> But to thyself repair;
> Wait thou amid the silence dim,
> And thou shalt find him there"

— is this some Neo-Platonist of the early Church, or is it Frederic Hosmer and his "Thought of God"? And when, again, we repeat —

> "O love divine of all that is
> The sweetest and the best,
> Fain would I come and rest to-night
> Upon thy tender breast"

— is this a verse of Madam Guyon, or is it the rationalism of Chadwick? Very humbly, then, and with a sense of imperfect obedience and a conscious insignificance among the great movements of Christian history, and yet with a sense of legitimacy, we take our place, not alone with those who contend for theological truth, but with the great company of the devout life, the Church of the Spirit. The Unitarians are mystics. Within their limited province and power it becomes their high vocation to testify to the

simplicity and reality of rational religion. They may have their place in defining the sources of authority, they may do their part in establishing the rule of righteousness; but their interior spirit is that of an unobscured and uninterrupted relation of the soul of man with the life of God. Standing at the end of his own brief ministry, the Master of the spiritual life, with self-effacing composure, promises to his friends the guidance of the Spirit of the truth, which was to lead them to greater revelations than even he could possibly disclose. It must be the same with any communion which sincerely desires to follow him. Much they may contend for of liberty in the Church and of righteousness in the world, and for either of these ends they may be content to remain a protesting and free minority; yet a greater privilege and a more imperative summons comes to them to transmit the witness of the Spirit of the truth, which shall guide men into richer revelations than it is possible for any single sect to teach or even to dream.

What, then, we go on to ask, are the marks of this Church of the Spirit, and what are the special duties of those who shall enter its communion? The Church of the Spirit, one must answer, is first of all a living church; and a living church, like all other living things, is marked by growth, progress, change. Fixity is not a sign of life and power, but of sterility and death. "There is nothing so destructive," said Thomas Arnold, "because so contrary to nature, as the strain to keep things fixed;" and, as one looks across the Christian world to-day, and sees the intensity of this strain to keep things fixed, he is moved, not by a sense of satisfaction that the strain is to snap, but by the pathos of this destructive and hopeless demand for fixity. The truth is ever revealing new aspects of itself: the truth that can move the heart must itself be a moving truth. "If God shall reveal anything to you," said John Robinson, "by any other instrument of his, be

as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive anything by my ministry; for I am confident that God has more truth yet to break out of his holy word." What is this but a repetition of the Master's promise that, when he had gone away, the Spirit of the truth would come and lead men into all truth? And does this not teach us why Jesus dared to give the Spirit of the truth that other and surprising name, the Comforter? What a strange word is this — that the Spirit of the truth is a comforter! How uncomforting, how uncomfortable the truth often seems! How many a devout soul, how many a Christian communion has dreaded to go on into the unknown truth, lest the truth, as it should be given, should bring no comfort! Yet this is the witness of all deep experiences of life, — that the only substantial comfort for a soul or for a church is in perfect loyalty to the truth as it is given. The only comforting revelation is a progressive revelation. What comfort can it be to build one's faith on a foundation which any day may slip from beneath one's feet, to wake some morning and find that a new biblical discovery has robbed us of our evidence of God! Stability for a church, as for a planet, is in its motion. The Church of the Spirit is a church of hope.

Again, the Church of the Spirit is a religious church. Exaggerated as it would be to speak of an irreligious church, who can deny that a great part of the energy of religious organizations is given to matters that are not religious, to the perfecting of machinery instead of the communicating of power? No church, it is true, can be delivered from the care of mechanism, no power can be utilized without machinery. Yet the aim of all well-directed skill, in the Church, as in the world of industry, is to transmit the power at one's command with the least possible obstruction or loss; and the chief source of waste of power, in a church as in a factory, is in the hindering

of its energy or in diverting it from its proper work. We look, once more, at the issues which consume the sessions of ecclesiastical councils; we look, indeed, at the methods we are ourselves tempted to employ as substitutes for the religious life; and how far away seems the Church of the Spirit! "What conclusions these controversies may come to," lately said a brave leader in a sorely embarrassed church, "is of no consequence: the only important thing is that they shall come to an end." And what shall bring to an end this waste of power, and make the Church of Christ a clear channel for the energy of God? It is a renewal of confidence in the witness of the Holy Spirit, a trust like that of Jesus in the Spirit of the truth. What the Church needs in its preaching and in its working is not more mechanism, or organization, or external reenforcement, but more confidence in its message, more consecration, more spirituality, more faith. The prayer of the present time should not be, "Lord, increase our congregations, our statistics, our income," but, "Lord, increase our faith." The Church of the Spirit is a church of faith.

Once more the Church of the Spirit is a ministering Church. By the grace of God we have come to a time when the chief interest of the world is outward-looking, generous, self-forgetting. It is the age of the social question; and the test of the Church, as of all other human organizations, must be found in its contribution to social service. But how slightly we are aware that effectiveness in social service does not proceed from the arrangements of reform! Behind all the social mechanism in which we may enlist there is a social dynamic to be secured; and the fundamental need of an age of social service is not so much for more channels of social usefulness as for more social wisdom, insight, patience, and power. And from what source does this power of phil-

anthropy proceed? It springs from the hidden sense of God, from the life of idealism, insight, vision, and faith, as the full stream which moves the modern industry flows from its secret source among the quiet hills. No graver mistake could be made than to fancy that the outward-looking activity of the present age is a detachment of its interest from religion. It is, on the contrary, a witness of religion, as the volume of the stream testifies to the abundance of its springs. Without a supply of social idealism the stream of social service soon runs dry.

Seventy years ago in the city of Boston there occurred a renaissance of practical philanthropy, which still gives to the city a leadership in social service. From one small group of closely associated friends there proceeded in those days the first illustration in this country of scientific charity in the work of Tuckerman, the first scientific treatment of the blind and feeble-minded in the work of Dr. Howe, the first intelligent care of the insane in the work of Dorothea Dix. But whence came the spiritual power which poured itself through these channels? It came from a person who was neither a reformer nor agitator nor practical leader, but a preacher, a thinker, a seer. Dr. Tuckerman was a lifelong intimate of William Ellery Channing. Dr. Howe was within the inner circle of his friendship. Miss Dix was one of his own household. The new philanthropy was the witness of a new religious force. Behind its wisdom and devotion lay a new faith in the worth of the human soul. Was this an unusual relationship in the history of social reform? On the contrary, it is illustrated by each transition in the history of social progress. Behind the liberty of Florence stood the prophecy of Savonarola; behind the *Innere Mission* of Germany the piety of Francke and of Wichern; behind the social movement of the Church of England the philosophy of Maurice; behind the new philanthropy of Boston the preaching of

Phillips Brooks. Thus it always has been; and, if in any congregation to-day one observes a new stirring of healthy-minded social service, he may be sure that back of the sense of the human need there is a personal source of faith and courage, like a throbbing engine communicating spiritual power. More than all, and behind all, is the new birth of philanthropy which proceeded from Christianity itself. It was an epoch hardly less marked in its thought of man than in its thought of God. The "Caritas" of the Christians had a scope and quality which the "Prodigalitas" of the Roman world never knew. Yet more extraordinary than Christian philanthropy itself was the origin of this new love of man. Jesus was not a reformer or organizer or social agitator; he was a prophet, a revealer, a mystic, a seer. Yet from his vision of the love of God issued the new summons to the service of man. "For their sakes," said Jesus, in perhaps his greatest statement of his mission, "I sanctify myself." "For their sakes" — that is the end toward which the Christian life proceeds, the end of generous service. "I sanctify myself" — that is the beginning from which the Christian life proceeds, the dynamic of personal consecration. The disciple of Jesus Christ sanctifies himself for others' sakes. The Church of the Spirit is a church of love.

And what then, finally, is this living, praying, ministering Church — this Church of hope and faith and love? What is it but organized religion as Jesus desired that it should live and do its work? With what a mighty hope he viewed the movement of the world, white as he saw it for his harvest, safe as he felt it to be in the guidance of the Spirit of the truth! With what a supporting faith he turned from all other ways of power, and trusted the dynamic of holiness! With what an individualized love he gave himself to the life of service, not to be ministered

unto, but to minister! Jesus was the most unfaltering of mystics. His spirit dwelt in habitual and unhindered communion with the Spirit of the truth. "I and my Father," he said, "are one." But it was not the sickly mysticism of self-centred meditation: it was the healthy mysticism which utters itself in self-effacing love. "Jesus Christ," says the book of Acts, "went about doing good," God having "anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power." It was the power of the Holy Ghost which made him able to do good. The Church of the ministering Spirit is the Church of Jesus Christ.

And we, who have our humble part in the inheritance of this lineage of the Spirit; we, for whom the way of direct communion with God has been swept clean of obstruction; we, to whom the language of the devout life in all the ages is a not unfamiliar tongue; we, who instead of purchasing with a great price this freedom are free-born members of the Church of the Spirit — what pledge have we to make to-night but of a better loyalty to the Church that moves and prays and ministers — the Church of hope and faith and love? How slight has been our service, how imperfect our attachment to this supreme vocation! How preoccupied have been our minds with mechanism, and how low has run our stream of power! Yet how plain it is that all the forces of spiritual vitality in the present time conspire to direct us where we ought to go! The noise of controversy and the discord of dissent are hushed when the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, comes. The revolving eddies of the age are helpless to detain a Church, when it feels beneath its life the main current of the life of the Spirit. The future welcomes the Church of the Spirit, as a strong breeze comes up out of the sea and swells the sails that have been long becalmed; and the Church which gives itself to that persuasion of the Spirit, coming as the wind comes, viewless, but full of power, is

borne on like a vessel that heads at last upon her proper course. The restlessness of her crew is stilled as they hasten to their new obedience; and they sing together as they trim their sails —

"Why labor at the dull mechanic oar
When the fresh breeze is blowing,
And the swift current flowing,
Right onward to the eternal shore?"

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

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